

## Other Endings

by Nick Land

This compilation of Reza Negarestani's writings is made available to an international audience at a moment in history when the Orientalist taboo, having only recently consolidated its mastery over discussions of Near-Eastern culture and politics, has been propelled by events into spectacular – and almost certainly lethal – convulsions. Negarestani's name, pre-occupations and matrix of socio-historical emergence can only further inflame this situation. He arrives as a tourist in hell "carrying a jerry-can of gasoline."

Negarestani's first, perhaps even preliminary, provocation is his complete indifference to the Orientalist role, with its appeal to deferential political correctness or any other morbid spiritual masochism of distinctively Christian cast. He entirely, and with the utmost casualness, disdains the platform of 'the Other'. His 'otherness' - while allowing partial and complex identifications - is not a marker of identity politics, less still a token of victimological credibility, nor even a sustainable category. It is an otherness situated beyond the threshold of a gate – of multiple gates – opened by meticulously selected words from a wide variety of sources and tongues, invoked by a dark cacophony of terrible and incoherent names. Even to speak of it – of them – in such terms, in such a context, is to cling to a position framed by an already devastated project of domestication, for purposes that are strictly pedagogical and evanescent. Better by far – or worse beyond imagination – to have already forgotten 'the Other' and be shifted into the dazzling rigorous obscurities of the Thing, the Blob, the Z-crowd, Mistmare, GAS, Anonymous-until-Now with its disease-drenched tails and Druj, Mother of Abominations.

From a certain perspective – an ultimately untenable one – what occurs in these writings is indistinguishable from a systematic confusion of boundaries, with the outside perpetually re-encountered on the inside, an inside that has always come from without. The very prospect of appropriate positioning undergoes prolonged, elaborate analysis, in order to demonstrate its essential inadequacy and ineliminable insecurity. The outside has already and ultimately taken over, and what remains - the relics and ruins meticulously unearthed by Negarestani the archaeologist, ethno-historian and excavator (for he is all these things too) – are testaments to a comprehensive pan-cultural catastrophe, leaving only violently decentralized 'polytics' in its wake.

Western readers can expect their peculiarly schizoid condition to be "butchered open" by this work. At once desensitized to visceral multiplicity by the 'Nietzschean' desecration of the Christian God's corpse, and simultaneously prostrated before strange gods - intimidated by the conspiracy of piety woven between Western multiculturalism and Islamist bombast - they are likely to find nothing in Negarestani so shocking as the Islamic apostasy of his writings, an apostasy which is itself virulently, profoundly and anomalously Islamic, without the comfort of distantiation, bypassing every impulse towards

mere rejection and instead taking the form of an absolute intellectual radicality, exposing an Islam which no longer tolerates cultural conformity because it has been stripped down to a cosmic-historic event. These writings are neither Islamist nor anti-Islamic, but rather hyper-Islamic or trans-Islamic, decoded from an ulteriority that neither politically and culturally instantiable Islam nor any determinable alternative to Islam can ever make its own. More distressing still, this orthodoxy to the point of black howling blasphemy feeds a pathos of long-lost and perhaps never consistently attained comedy, an understated comedic register of corrosive epistemological vitriol.

Consider a grotesquely reductive, violent, comic yet still suggestive thesis: Islam is to Negarestani what Marxism is to Bataille. Everything is gathered at the brink of a limit, enveloped by a totalization of unsurpassable subtlety and comprehensiveness, within which every guile and stratagem of history finds itself anticipated, drained utterly of implication and potentiality. Yet this absolute absorption, this theomorphic black-hole, nevertheless receives only the most tangential – even mocking – attention, not only because it is assumed, pre-integrated (true otherness at last!), but far more significantly because 'everything' happens beyond the limit, returns from beyond the limit, as inappropriable yet operative excess overflowing the Omega-configuration of Being. This is the double register continuously in play in Negarestani's texts, a doubling that incarnates Shi'a 'taqqiya' ("Islamic hypercamouflage") across all conceptual and thematic domains, as a simulacrum of "concrete nomadism." It can easily be missed, since everything is restored, almost unchanged, except for a sinister, nebulous, ultra-conceptual and sub-psychological insinuation. What previously enjoyed the unchallenged authority of elementary fact now transpires as puppetry, rhythmically jolted by the reverberations of accomplished apocalypse – a formulation which itself remains comically misleading unless the dramaturgy of revelation is itself glimpsed askance, as if from the other side, staged out of the unimaginable.

Communist futurology has become merely ridiculous and in doing so it has ceased to be comic. If anything it has become more frightening to those who most ardently revile it, precisely because – as a refuge of enraged impossibilism – it no longer indicates anything beyond itself. From being the anticipated limit of social possibility, communism has decayed into the impossible, thus appropriating the implacable nihilistic rage that is eternally allied with impossibility. As an indefensible position, it has become unassailable. Unbound from the vulnerability of the real, it persists only as a testament to the abstract negation it once disdained.

The fact that the virtual Caliphate organizing global Islamist agitation could so easily succumb to the same fatality, invested by the same forces – often exactly and empirically the same forces – of grim negativity, serving only to consolidate the dutiful vigilance of its opponents, makes the Negarestani intervention exceptionally important. One might easily, although ironically say 'uniquely' important. It is precisely by re-polarizing this fatality, approaching it – more precisely emerging from it – with an unprecedented seriousness that

is indistinguishable from the black excess of an extreme, posthuman comedy, that it becomes entirely consistent with the "holocaust of freedom" of the Cthulhu cults. A world enthralled by Islam, even, or especially, in its animosity, is freed into the timeless nightmare of the 'Qiyamah' or Islamic Apocalypse, where unity finds its consummate condensation and critical perfection, simultaneously combusting into a pestilential redistribution of heretical disorder and eternally unassimilable contagion.

Encountering these intimations of diffuse shape without form or substance, strangers even to God, filtering unimpeded through curtains that closed for ever upon the end of the world, there is every opportunity for bafflement and exultation, for slowly unfolding ethnographic enlightenment and for sudden, vertiginous descents into unilluminated chasms of sacred horror. But most of all, at least, most consistently, there is relief from the suffocating pieties of our age – in all its dimensions – and for a peculiar delight that is only to be found in the midst of unexpected extravagances of utter incorrectness.

Read Negarestani, and pray ...